

**For Immediate Release**

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Contact: Mike Brown, Mayor's Office, 614-645-6428

Barb Seckler, Public Safety, 614-645-8210

Sgt. Kevin Corcoran or Amanda Ford, Division of Police, (614) 645-4593

Jose Rodriguez, Columbus Public Health, 614-645-6928

## **Columbus Urban Area rank in the Top 4 on the Tactical Interoperable Communications Scorecard**

(Columbus) Columbus is again earning national recognition for public safety, as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) ranked our community in the top four most prepared cities in America on the "Tactical Interoperable Communications Scorecard." Since 9/11/2001, the City has worked with regional partners to invest more than \$37.5 million in planning, training and communications equipment to improve emergency cooperation.

**"Homeland security starts with hometown security, and we are committed to excellence not only for the families of Columbus but the residents of the entire region," said Mayor Michael B. Coleman. "As our Divisions of Police and Fire are earning national accreditation for providing the highest quality services, this DHS ranking further shows that our Officers and Firefighters are the nation's best."**

The Scorecard was developed by DHS to assist urban/metropolitan areas on how to best improve their tactical interoperable communications capabilities. While Columbus and Central Ohio were overlooked in the initial round of Federal Homeland Security Funding, local Safety and Government leaders have since worked together to bring in \$33.8 million in DHS and Department of Justice grants for communications and interoperability tools.

The City of Columbus' Department of Public Safety, Divisions of Police and Fire, and Columbus Public Health all work together to ensure that the City is cooperating in the instance of an emergency or homeland security incident. The City's efforts continue to be managed by Police Deputy Chief John Rockwell.

**"Columbus' outstanding partnerships between regional agencies, organizations and jurisdictions is one of the biggest keys to the City's success," said Deputy Police Chief John Rockwell.**

In addition to the \$33.8 million in grant funding, the City spent more than \$3.7 million to purchase radios for Police Officers and Firefighters, portable 800 MHz radio towers, 911 digital audio equipment, video cameras and other safety tools since 9/11. The grants are managed by the Franklin County EMA, of which the City is a partner, and Franklin County Justice Programs & Homeland Security, and distributed throughout the county to address challenges such as interoperability.

**"Columbus, Franklin County and the entire Central Ohio region should be extremely proud of this national recognition," said Columbus Public Safety Director Mitchell J. Brown. "The men and women involved in this process, most**

**of whom have other significant duties, have dedicated hundreds of hours to its success and to the safety of our citizens.”**

The City of Columbus and regional partners in Central Ohio drafted the tactical interoperability communications plan, as was required by the Federal Department of Homeland Security, that includes strategic, tactical, and equipment components. The City and regional partners practiced the system with a full scale tactical exercise in July of 2006. The Department of Homeland Security rated each urban area based on how it addressed Governance, Standard Operating Procedures and Usage.

In late December, the Columbus Urban Area was advised that their Tactical Interoperability Communications Plan received top ratings in all three categories. Only a handful of cities across the country received such high marks. This success can be attributed to the outstanding relationship among all of the disciplines and jurisdictions that comprise the HSAC and operate under the guidance and authority of the Franklin County Commissioners and the Mayor of Columbus.

The HSAC itself is comprised of police, fire, health, EMS, government officials, justice programs, private sector, hospitals, EMA and a host of others. The plan encompasses not only the Central Ohio area but will eventually reach out to a 14 county region. With the local and Federal funds and a plan developed by the Columbus Division of Communications, the HSAC has purchased communications equipment that allows an unprecedented ability to communicate across jurisdictional lines and disciplines. Just as importantly, governance, procedures and protocols have been established that set the standards for use of this equipment and further ensure a coordinated use of these communications.